

Notes from the Shore ~ Fall 2022

Happenings in and Around Your Lake Community

Brought to you by the Marinette County Land & Water Conservation Division

1926 Hall Avenue • Marinette, WI 54143 (715) 732-7780



Wisconsin Turtles ~ A Keystone Species Keeping Our Water Clean

By Patrick Goggin, Lakes Specialist, Extension Lakes



As we explore the fallen logs and nearshore aquatic plants of pickerel weed, bulrush, and arrowhead along our shores, we often see turtles sunning themselves, eating insects, or nibbling on vegetation. The familiar turtles of our lake habitats and their nearby wetland environments include western painted, snapping, common musk, Blanding's, northern map, wood, and spiny softshell species. But did you know these animals provide us with something special?

Some turtles have been labeled as keystone species! Let's explore turtle biology, including how they are important to clean water, what threats exist that are causing turtles hardship, and conservation strategies we can all embrace to help them through life.

Ecology and Life History

Turtles in Wisconsin are associated with lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, and bogs. However, they can also be found foraging for food on land. Even though turtles reside in all corners of the world, they are considered the most threatened of vertebrates. Of the 11 species of turtles in Wisconsin, one is endangered (ornate box turtle), one is threatened (wood turtle) and three are of special concern (Blanding's turtle, smooth softshell turtle and map turtle).



Active primarily from April to October, a turtle's daily activities include sleeping, basking in the sun, and foraging for food. Not a bad gig! Depending on the species, turtles can be omnivores, herbivores, or carnivores. Algae, fruit, stems, leaves, and insects are all common food sources. For mobile prey like tadpoles and fish, turtles use hunting methods such as ambushing or stalking.

Turtles have slow maturation rates; sexual maturation in some species takes as long as twenty years. Mating primarily occurs in late spring and involves males courting females. Once fertilization takes place, females will usually travel to upland nesting sites in June and July, excavate a nest, lay their eggs, and cover the nest with loose soil.

From August to September, hatchlings will emerge and head for water and cover. Prior to the onset of winter, turtles begin to hibernate beneath soil and plant debris of woodlands and prairies or in the mucky bottoms along our waterways.



Essential to the Ecosystem

Turtles are a keystone species. These important reptiles provide a role in the aquatic food web that is essential to an entire chain of linked species, habitats, and ecosystem services. Without turtles in our waterways, they can degrade and collapse, and other species' populations and ecosystem functions can be lost.

Turtles help maintain water quality by removing sources of harmful bacteria when they eat carcasses of fish and other animals that die in our waterways. Turtles are also essential in keeping fish habitat and wetland areas thriving! As turtles get older, they eat progressively more seeds and vegetable matter, rather than protein. They cycle nutrients in their guts and shells, and with the seeds in their guts, they spread new plants around as they move through their home range.

Scientists are untangling other turtle mysteries such as their grand impact on soil formation and health. Turtles, like amphibians, are excellent indicators of environmental pollution challenges. Due to their place in the food web, they can accumulate high levels of toxins such as mercury, lead, DDT, and PCBs in their bodies, alerting monitoring researchers to pollution concerns.



Threats

Most of Wisconsin's turtle species breed in late May through June, and they often move across roads to lay their eggs in nests on higher ground like roadsides. Road mortality is a leading cause of their decline. The predation of turtle nests by raccoons, fox skunks, and coyotes is another major problem.

Since the DNR began seeking information about turtle sightings and crossings in 2012, people have provided more than 7,500 reports, with roughly half of those identifying turtle crossing areas. Such reports have substantially increased awareness and education, boosting turtle conservation in the state.



Protection, Research, and Conservation

Research shows that turtle nest predation rates have sky-rocketed in recent decades because of increased mammal populations. This has resulted in low hatch rates in many areas of the state. Scientists estimate that if this high nest predation continues for a generation of turtles, some of the less common species may decline to levels that are unrecoverable, meaning the species will become extinct in the state, and common species may become much less abundant.



If you spot a turtle in your yard from mid-May to early June, it is likely looking for a place to lay eggs. There are some simple and proven nest protection methods that can be used to improve turtle nesting success. To find out more on how you can help protect a nest or report a turtle crossing, see the Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program at <https://wiatri.net/inventory/witurtles>

Prehistoric creatures covered in armor, turtles have many amazing traits vital to maintaining healthy waters. You can make a difference in turtle conservation on our local waterbody by increasing their habitat with fish sticks and other tree drop projects, bolstering native aquatic vegetation, and being mindful and watchful when you see them crossing roads or building nests.



What to do With Fallen Leaves ~ Leave the Leaves for Wildlife!

By David Mizejewski ~ National Wildlife Federation Blog

You shouldn't feel obligated to get rid of every last fallen leaf in your yard this fall. Leave the leaves . . . they offer a lot of benefits for wildlife and your garden. Read on to find out why and for tips on how to minimize the time you spend raking this autumn and maximize the benefit to wildlife and the greater environment that fallen leaves offer.

Leave the Leaves for Wildlife

A leaf layer several inches deep is a natural thing in any area where trees and shrubs naturally grow, whether that's the local woodlands or your own yard or garden. The leaf layer is its own ecosystem! Many wildlife species use the leaf layer as their primary habitat including salamanders, chipmunks, wood frogs, box turtles, toads, shrews, earthworms, millipedes, and thousands of insect species.

Many butterfly and moth species overwinter in the leaf layer, including luna moths, great spangled fritillaries, woolly bear caterpillars (which become Isabella tiger moths), and red-banded hairstreaks. Some species overwinter as eggs, some as pupae, and some as adults. In the case of moths 94% of species rely on the leaf layer to complete their lifecycle. If you rake up and throw away all of your leaves this fall, you'll be getting rid of important habitat for these beautiful and beneficial insects, many of which are pollinators.

Many bird species forage in the leaf layer searching for insects and other invertebrates to eat, including wood thrushes, towhees, robins, sparrows, common yellowthroats, bobwhites, and wild turkeys. The vast majority of our backyard birds . . . some 96% . . . rely on those butterfly and moth caterpillars as the

primary food source for their babies during the nesting season. If you remove all of your fallen leaves, there will be fewer of these insects in and around your yard and fewer birds too. Some birds, such as ovenbirds, also nest in the leaf layer on the ground rather than in the branches. Even some bat species overwinter in the leaf layer and can't survive severe cold temperatures without it.

Leaves are Free Mulch and Fertilizer

From a gardening perspective, fallen leaves offer a double benefit. Leaves form a natural mulch that helps suppress weeds and at the same time fertilize the soil as they break down. Why spend money on mulch and fertilizer when you have a free source in the form of fallen leaves? Simply let leaves lie where they fall or move them into your garden beds to



protect your plants' roots, suppress weeds, preserve soil moisture and eventually break down and return nutrients to the soil.

If you're worried about leaves blowing out of your garden beds, you can shred them into a finer textured mulch by putting them in a big trash can and using hedge clippers to chop them down into smaller pieces less likely to blow away.

If you decide to get rid of your leaves, don't throw them in the trash. They end up in the landfill where they break down and produce methane, a significant greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. Instead, compost leaves at home or drop them off at a municipal recycling center so they can be turned into compost that you and other members of your community can use in the spring. Some communities even offer curbside pickup of leaves specifically for municipal composting operations.

Composting or shredding will likely eliminate many of the insects living in the leaves as you shred them, but at least you'll be recycling the leaves back into your soil.



SKIP THE RAKE. LEAVE THE LEAVES.

**MAKE YOUR YARD AND GARDENS
HEALTHIER WITH FALL LEAVES.**

- **MOW THEM SEVERAL TIMES AND LEAVE THEM ON THE LAWN AS MULCH.**
- **ADD THEM TO YOUR COMPOST PILE AS LAYERS TO COVER FOOD WASTE.**
- **SPREAD A THICK LAYER AROUND TREES AND FLOWER BEDS.**

Avoid Lawns, Mowers and Blowers

Yes, a thick layer of fallen leaves will smother lawn. The best way to solve this problem is to reduce the size of your lawn, which is an ecological dead-zone that supports almost no living things and requires large amounts of polluting pesticides and fertilizers and wasteful amounts of water to stay green. Even better, completely convert your lawn into beautiful natural plantings.

If you must have a tidy look in your yard or maintain a lawn to comply with Home Owners Association or municipal rules, you can move leaves off the lawn but still use them as mulch in your planting beds. You can also use a mulching mower to chop leaves on your lawn into tiny bits that won't smother the lawn and also return nutrients to the soil.

Avoid gasoline-powered lawnmowers and leaf blowers if at all possible. They are enormous producers of air pollution, impacting human health and contributing to climate change. They also produce tremendous amounts of noise pollution. Electric mowers and blowers produce less pollution than gasoline-powered ones and are better options, though not pollution-free. Use a manual push mower to cut your lawn, which doesn't create air or noise pollution like gasoline-powered mowers do. When it

comes to moving leaves, just use a rake. You'll be able to hear the chirping of birds and other natural sounds while you're working, plus you'll get some good exercise! The best option of all is to create a landscape where you don't have to mow, blow or rake at all but can allow the natural cycle of leaf-fall to happen.

Remember, the less time you have to spend doing the back-breaking work of blowing, mowing, or raking your leaves, the more time you have to enjoy the gorgeous fall weather outside and the wildlife visiting your garden!

Fall is a fantastic time to make your yard more wildlife-friendly by leaving your fallen leaves on your property and by planting native plants. Our Native Plant Collections are curated to support wild native bee species, butterflies and moths, and the birds that feed on them right in your own yard or garden.



Wisconsin Leeches

By Krista Iding, Editorial Intern ~ Wisconsin Natural Resources ~ September/October 1986

For all of their negative symbolism and squirmy demeanor, leeches do us an amazing amount of good.

Leeches have two suckers, two to five pair of eyes, up to 80 teeth, and may range in length from one-fifth to 19 inches long. They are slimy, sucking, segmented worms. Yuck! Revolting? Well, yes. But not altogether.



Often collectively called "blood-suckers" because of their medicinal history, this term is not really representative. Of the 50 or so species of leech in the United States, only a small minority would actually suck a meal from warm-blooded animals. *Macrobdella* and *Philobdella* are the two most common

United States leeches that take human blood. Most prefer cold meals. They prey on bits of dead animal flesh or kill and eat tiny cold-blooded critters like snails or shell fish. Like their cousins the earthworms, they are recyclers who break down dead organic matter, making it available as nutrients for plants and other aquatic organisms. Some leeches temporarily attach themselves to larger cold-blooded animals like frogs, fish and turtles. They ride about on these new companions looking for a meal of scraps. Once it is found, they depart.



Wisconsin has about 39 species of leech made up of four groups or families; parasites of fish, frogs, snails, turtles and other invertebrates; free-living scavengers of ponds and lakes; and many species that live off natural foods and only occasionally supplement their diet with a blood meal.

A common Wisconsin species of parasitic leech is *Myzobdella moorei* – a greenish creature rarely more than one inch long. Its period of infestation (early spring and late fall) is short and damage to the fish population of any one area is slight. These parasitic leeches are much smaller than those found in a lake's

shallow area, and as many as 200 have been seen stuck to the head of one walleye. But this is no cause for alarm. Fish parasitized by leeches carry no parasites which are harmful to humans.

Some types of leeches are excellent fish bait. *Nepheleopsis obscura*, called the “ribbon leech”, is the most common bait leech in Wisconsin. This non-bloodsucking leech is distinguished from others by the firm ribbon-like edges of its flattened body. It is usually three to four inches long, gray to brown in color and spotted with black. This leech, an active swimmer, continues undulating movements even after it has been pierced by a hook. While this continual motion has always attracted fish, most anglers didn't pick up on the secret until the early 1970's, when a bait leech craze began.

A popular method of trapping leeches for fishing is to bait a can with fish or meat scraps, flatten the open end and place the can in a shallow pond with a muck or silt bottom. Leeches feed actively at night, so traps that are bit designed to confine the leeches must be tended before they leave at dawn. But the fisher must beware, for all leeches are not effective bait. Leech specialists have noted that gamefish, including walleye, crappie and small-mouth bass, can differentiate between leech species. For instance, although a common Wisconsin leech, the *Macrobdella decora*, strongly resembles the ribbon leech, fish ignore it. Oddly enough, fish most likely snub this leech



because of its bright coloring. Experts say its reddish-orange belly and red-spotted back probably developed as protective mechanisms.



Despite its worthlessness as a fish bait, the *Macrobdella decora* is undoubtedly the most historically useful of all leech species. Because it has been used to treat various ailments, the *Macrobdella decora* has come to be known as the “medicine leech.” The earliest recorded use of this leech was in 100 BC by an ancient Syrian medical sect. The Romans and Greeks followed suit, and by the Middle Ages, leeches were medically indispensable.

Primarily, the medicine leech was used to draw loads of “bad blood” from patients. What dictated “bad blood” was left to the discretion of the medicine men or doctors. Because the leech attaches wherever it is guided, and because it produces an anti-coagulant that keeps blood flowing even after the leech has been detached, its popularity steadily grew. In fact, blood-letting became so popular in the Middle Ages that physicians themselves were called “leeches.” The leech obsession continued, and by the 19th century it is estimated that over 60 million leeches were used annually in Europe alone.

If you haven’t encountered leeches while fishing in Wisconsin, chances are you will while swimming. Leeches inhabit ponds, marshes, lakes and slow streams. Disturbances in the water like splashing or swimming attract the bloodsucking type. Once a leech chooses its target, it fastens itself to an unsuspecting victim with its rear suction cup while exploring for thin areas of skin with its front (the narrower) end. Then, it tightly attaches its front sucker and makes three painless incisions.

By the time it finishes its meal, a leech may be five times heavier than when it began. Because bloodsuckers form a powerful seal, plucking them off your skin is usually difficult. However, they can be eliminated easily with a sprinkle of salt and be returned to their habitat.

Today the medicinal leech is still used throughout Europe and Asia to remove the evidence of a black eye or bruise. It is also being used experimentally in micro-surgical procedures like the reattachment of severed appendages. Some leeches have been found to yield a chemical blend of antibiotics, anti-coagulants and anesthetics which may be useful in the treatment of cancer and cardiovascular diseases.



Because of its ecological importance as an aquatic scavenger, and its economic significance in a growing bait leech industry, researchers continue to study the *Nepheleopsis* species to determine management and culture techniques which will be most effective in preserving the leech’s role in nature.

Fall Activities for Family Fun









By Aubrey Hunt

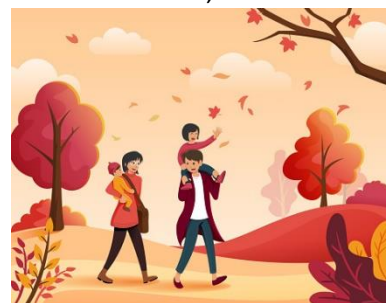
www.smartkids101.com

Ah, fall. I feel like just heard everyone give a collective sigh of relief. School is back in session, the Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte is back on the menu, and temperatures are starting to dip here in the South . . . even if it's just slightly. We will take it!

Welcome, Fall. Please come in, remove your boots and cute scarf, and stay a while! With the welcoming of fall comes all the fun fall activities to plan, bonfires, pumpkin patches, harvest festivals. It's just a great time of year for some good old family fun! I've surfed to the end of the internet to find the most fun family ideas, the best fall recipes, and the cutest fall crafts and décor. You are bound to find something inspiring on the list!



-  **Visit a Farmer's Market** ~ fall is the perfect time to visit a Farmer's Market. The weather is lovely and the seasonal pickin's are good. Look for things available especially in autumn, like apples, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and butternut squash. Shop early in the day for the best selection!
-  **Have a Board Game Night** ~ a chilly fall night is the perfect time to cozy up together for a family game! Need game suggestions? If you're playing with a variety of ages, two crowd-pleasers in our home have been *Blokus* and *Disney's Eye Found It*. Both are easy enough for young kids to participate, yet fun enough for the adults not to *lose their ever-loving minds* during game play. (Don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about!) That's what I call a win-win.
-  **Bake Apple Cider Donuts** ~ Apple Cider Donuts. Need I say more? One of my favorite fall activities is to fire up the oven with some yummy seasonal treats. So bake them, wrap them up, and share with a friend. I can't think of a better gift to say "Welcome Fall" These just look too amazing to keep all to yourself.
-  **Make Chili** ~ one of my favorite go to recipes for fall is chili! It's healthy, my family loves it, and it's quite easy to throw together.
-  **Attend a Local High School Football Game** ~ this one should be self-explanatory; grab the fam, head out to the local high school, and enjoy a football game. Buy some concessions, watch the band perform at half time, and soak in all the Friday Night Lights has to offer.
-  **Go on a Hike or Nature Walk** ~ fall is great weather for hiking: the gorgeous trees changing colors and losing their leaves, plus the cooler temperatures mean you're less likely to break a sweat in the first ten minutes! To make it more fun for the kids and keep them engaged on the walk, play nature I Spy with them.
-  **Do an Apple Taste Test** ~ increase your kids' fruit intake for the day the fun way; by performing an official taste test! Buy several different colors and varieties of apples and slice them up. Let your kids try each kind (blindfolded if they dare) and report back to you on the characteristics of each and which is their favorite.
-  **Read a Fall Book** ~ reading is one of my favorite fall activities, and libraries are one of my very favorite places. Take my advice and cozy up with your kids plus one of these awesome titles.
 - ***Hooray for Fall!* By Kazuo Iwamura** ~ This book has been our jam lately. It's perfectly suited for ages 2-5, and it tells a charming story of a family of squirrels as they usher in everyone's favorite season: Fall.



- *Mouse's First Fall by Lauren Thompson* ~ is another fun little interactive story that follows a mouse as he discovers what fall is all about. Great for younger kids!

Do a Family Photo Shoot ~ take advantage of the lovely weather outside . . . and beautiful nature backdrop . . . and snap some family photos! (psst ~ and dare I say it? Christmas is coming. Get those photos out of the way now so you don't have to worry about it during the busy holiday season).

Play "Thankful Ball" ~ looking for something on this list of fall activities that's a family-friendly, active game? Try a playing "Thankful Ball!" Shhh . . . it's just a game of catch with an added twist: before you throw the ball, you have to say one thing that you're thankful for. It'll help get your kids in the right frame of mind for this season leading up to Thanksgiving. Plus, you'll be able to go outside and enjoy some fall weather.

Rake the Leaves ~ No, I promise I'm not just sneaking a chore onto this list. But you do have leaves and they do need to be raked, so let's call it serendipity. As you rake, have fun with it! Let the kids help use the "grown up" tools and pile all the leaves up in the middle of the yard. Once the pile is nice and fluffy, take turns jumping in it! This is a classic fall fun activity . . . and if you play your cards right, you can get your leaves cleaned up at the same time.



Do a Photo Shoot in the Leaf Pile ~ you've got your leaves all raked up and the kids are having a ball jumping in the pile? Great! Grab your smartphone, because these make for the best photos! Try some action shots of the kids jumping in mid-air. Also snag a photo of them laying face-up in the leaf pile with the biggest grins on their faces because this is fun and you are the best parent ever. And then ask them to help you rake the leaves back up and bag them, because this is your yard and they just trashed the place. Haha!

Make a Fall Wreath ~ I've been looking forward to decorating my front door with a friendly fall wreath this year. I've got my sights set on a simple burlap wreath. Isn't it great? There are tons of wreath ideas and tutorials on Pinterest, so be sure to check them out. It's a relatively easy, inexpensive way to cozy up your front door and be even more welcoming this fall!

Have a Movie Night ~ one of our favorite fall activities . . . or really all year round . . . is to fire up the Blu-Ray player and settle into a favorite family movie. Then pop some popcorn, pour up some sodas, and let the kids have a treat just like at a movie theatre! This will be a family fun night you won't forget!


Visit a Pumpkin Patch or Local Farm ~ Oh, this one's a classic. Take the kiddos to a local pumpkin patch or farm, take some photos and buy some pumpkins to use for decorating. If you are looking for a simple way to spend time together without a lot of fuss, this is it.


Make Bird Feeders ~ "feed the birds, tuppence a bag". Or in this case, just use some leftover toilet paper rolls. I



bet Mary Poppins never thought of that one! Punch two holes in the top of the toilet paper roll and tie some scrap yarn through each hole. This will be what it hangs from, so make sure the


string is long enough to go around the branch. Then have the kids slather peanut butter on the toilet paper roll and roll it in bird seed. The seed sticks to the peanut butter. Birds love to eat it, kids love to make it. It's one of the best fall activities for crafty kids who care about the environment . . . or just love to get sticky fingers! Heehee!


 **Find a Fall Festival to Attend** ~ they're popping up all over the country, as we usher in the new season of the year. And these festivals are totally geared toward families, which means you'll likely find lots of fall activities all in one spot. Such as . . . hay rides, corn mazes, and games for the kids . . . sounds like the perfect weekend activity to me!


 **Go Apple Picking** ~ if you're fortunate enough to live near an apple orchard, this is one of the must-do fall activities. Make sure you bring a camera with you to capture more awesome photos of your fall activities. Pick enough apple to use for one or more of the apple related fall activities on this list.


 **Go Backyard Camping** ~ when the weather starts to dip into the cooler temperature range, camping is one of the best fun fall activities. But it's not always easy to find a family-friendly campsite or work around busy schedules to actually get away for a weekend. That's where backyard camping comes into the picture. Lots of fun, way less commitment. So set up that tent in your own backyard a place that has all the amenities of home. Literally. It's the best of both worlds!




 **Paint Pumpkins** ~ when I saw this idea. I knew it was one of the fall activities I had to try this year. But not just any pumpkins, no! You use the kind you buy at the craft store so that all that hard work doesn't just get thrown out at the end of the season. Isn't that brilliant? You get to keep them and use them again next year.

 **Learn about Leaves** ~ the former teacher in me loves this idea for educational fall activities: collect leaves outside and do leaf rubbings! Kids love to collect leaves anyway . . . why not make a little learning experience out of it? Encourage them to inspect the different parts of the leaves. Can they see the veins? What do they think those are for?


 **Do a Service Project Together** ~ that's right . . . volunteer with your kids! Once your kids are a little bit older, it's a great idea to include them in "giving back" to the community. Whether you volunteer at your local animal shelter, local nursing home or work together to make Operation Christmas Child boxes, be sure you talk to your kids about why you are volunteering together. Instill the importance of helping others as you recount your own personal blessings this season!

 **A Giving Thanks Activity for Kids** ~ sometimes it's easier to write down what you're grateful for rather than being put on the spot to say it at the dinner table.

If that's the case with your kids, consider creating a family "gratitude jar," where you each write what you're thankful for and place it in the jar. Reading them aloud on Thanksgiving Day could be a fun way to spend a little time talking about what you're grateful for . . . without putting anyone on the spot.

 **Go for a Drive when the Leaves Change** ~ here's one of the simplest fall activities you can do; take a drive together as a family to observe the beautiful trees as their leaves transform. No need to plan for a hike or a picnic, just hop in the car with some tunes on a Sunday afternoon and see what you can discover! Make sure to bring a camera or phone to capture those truly majestic views.



-  **Donate Cans of Food to a Local Food Bank** ~ this one is a simple way to give back. You can explain to your kids what a food bank does . . . how some people and/or families need extra food, and a food pantry collects donations to give to them so they won't be hungry. Then, depending on your kids' ages and maturity, have them help out. They might be able to collect donations from friends, family members, and neighbors. Or younger kids might be excited to pick up a few extra items at the grocery store on your next trip. Then find a collection location and go with them to donate the items.



-  **Decorate Your Home (and Front Porch) for Fall** ~ as we're talking about fall activities, don't forget your own home! Freshen up your mantel for fall or decorate your front porch. It's the little things that make us smile and remember how glad we are that fall is here . . . so welcome some of that warmth into your home! Set out pumpkins and mums, and bring in some natural wood and burlap elements for a quick fix that will continue to fill your heart with joy!
-  **Do Turkey Handprints** ~ please tell me I'm not the only one who gets excited about this fall activity. I have great memories from doing these when I was a kid, so I guess that's part of why I love it now. Plus it's one of the less messy, simple fall crafts you can do. That's always a plus in my book! Simply help your child trace his hands on a piece of paper. Then let him color it to turn it into a turkey with the fingers as feathers and the thumb as the turkey's head. Then frame it because his hands will never be that small again.
-  **Make a Fall Snack Mix and Share** ~ this is one of the fall activities that is great for all ages . . . even small kids can help you dump ingredients together and mix it up! Customize your own mix with ingredients such as these: Chex Mix – makes a good base, Candy corn, Yogurt raisins, Bugles, Chocolate or butterscotch chips, Reese's Pieces, Goldfish or Cheez-it crackers, almonds or cashews, Craisins . . . to name a few! As long as food allergies aren't a concern, it would be fun to divide the mix up and deliver to friends, neighbors, and teachers as a delicious little fall treat!
-  **Go to the Park** ~ simply enjoy the fall weather with your family by heading to the local park with a picnic meal. Add in a game of Frisbee or tossing a football back and forth (no tackling!) to round out the family fall activities fun.
-  **Go on a Geocaching/Letterboxing Adventure!** ~ Here's a fun way to enjoy the great-outdoors this fall: go on an adventure together. Whether you try geocaching or letterboxing, you'll be sure to have a great time with your kids. It's one of those fall activities that is really suitable for all ages, so it would be great for sibling groups that might be otherwise difficult to please. Go exploring! And don't forget your camera!





Five Ways to Attract Birds This Fall

By David Mizejewski National Wildlife Federation Blog

Attracting and watching wild birds right in your own yard or garden are great activities year-round, but as migratory birds pass through on their way south and winter-resident species work to fatten up for the winter, autumn is a great time to think about

how to support these feathered friends. Here are five tips from the National Wildlife Federation and Wild Birds Unlimited, our Certified Wildlife Habitat Champion, to create a fantastic habitat for your neighborhood birds this fall.

Plant Native Shrubs

You can instantly improve the attractiveness of your yard to birds in the fall by planting native shrubs. Shrubs offer two things that birds need as the weather turns colder or wetter: a food source and a place where they can find cover from the elements. Choose native shrubs that offer berries to provide food for migratory birds as well as resident birds that stick around year-round. Include some evergreens in your garden to provide even more cover value when the weather turns cold or windy and for when precipitation (whether it's snow or rain) is heavy.

Add a Heated Birdbath

Wild birds need water year-round and it's easy to provide with a simple birdbath. Birdbaths should be wide and shallow, no more than three inches deep. Birds will use the bath to get a drink and also to keep their feathers clean and in good shape. When the temperatures drop below the freezing point water can be difficult to come by. Birds will consume snow to stay hydrated if all the liquid water is frozen, but if there's no snow on the ground staying hydrated in winter can be a struggle. You can solve that by installing a heated birdbath, or by adding a heater to your existing bath. Heated birdbaths don't make the water hot, they just keep it above the freezing point so that it stays liquid for the birds to use.

Put up a Roosting Box

A roosting box is a special kind of birdhouse that . . . unlike a nesting box . . . birds don't use as a place to raise their young. Instead, birds use roosting boxes as places to find cover when the weather turns bad. This different function means roosting boxes have a different design than nesting boxes. The entry hole is at the bottom rather than the top, which helps trap heat and keep the box warmer than outside temperatures (since heat rises). Roosting boxes also have perches inside to allow more birds to fill in the interior space. The more birds that pile in, the more their collective body heat helps them stay warm. Mount the roosting box on a pole or in a tree and look in the evenings or the early morning for birds coming and going from this supplemental shelter.

Leave the Leaves

In the fall, deciduous trees and shrubs drop their leaves. In nature, these leaves protect the root zone of the plants from extreme temperatures and exposure, help retain soil moisture, suppress weeds, and add nutrients back into the soil as they decompose. Fallen leaves are Mother's Nature's natural mulch and

fertilizer. Yet many of us spend our fall weekends raking or blowing all the leaves away. Not only is this wasteful, leaving the fallen leaves in the autumn provides a food source for birds. That's because many insects and other invertebrates overwinter in the leaf litter. Non-migratory birds forage in the leaf litter searching for insects and spiders after it's too cold for those invertebrates to be active. Many butterflies and moths overwinter in the leaves as either caterpillars or pupae. In spring they emerge as adults, mate, lay eggs and produce new caterpillars. Those spring caterpillars are the primary food source for baby birds. If you remove all of your leaves this fall, you wipe out a major food pantry for the birds next year.



Wild Bird Roosting Boxes ~ Offer Shelter for Winter Birds

By Melissa Mayntz









www.thespruce.com

All Backyard birders understand the importance of birdhouses for providing birds with suitable nesting sites. After nesting season ends, however, roosting boxes . . . which are different than birdhouses . . . can be even more

critical for birds' survival. Depending on the bird species and size of the flock, a dozen birds' or more may take advantage of a single roosting box to share body heat through cold winter nights. This communal roosting in a sheltered spot greatly improves the birds' chances of surviving harsh weather and sudden freezes. Birds that frequently use roost boxes include Downy Woodpeckers, Bluebirds, Titmice, Nuthatches, Chickadees, and wrens. Other species typically smaller birds or other species that use bird houses, may also take advantage of roosting boxes.

Roosting Boxes vs. Birdhouses

At first glance, a roosting box looks very similar to a birdhouse. In fact, many birds will use empty birdhouses for roosting, even though they aren't ideal. To encourage birds to roost, a well-designed roosting box will have:

-  Fewer ventilation and drainage holes to conserve more heat
-  An entrance hole near the bottom instead of the top to prevent rising heat loss.
-  Interior perches to accommodate greater numbers of birds without smothering
-  Scored walls or interior mesh to help birds cling and climb safely
-  A hinged side, bottom or top for easy cleaning
-  A metal guard around the entrance hole to deter predators
-  Larger than typical dimensions to accommodate more birds
-  Thicker walls for better insulation in winter

What is a Roosting Box?

A roosting box is similar to a birdhouse in that it provides shelter for birds. However, unlike birdhouses, roosting boxes are not intended for building nests or raising hatchlings. Instead, a roosting box provides shelter from predators, low temperatures, and poor weather for multiple cavity-nesting birds at once.





Birders can convert birdhouses into winter roosting boxes by making simple changes to nesting shelters. For example, a birdhouse may be able to have its front panel flipped to move the entrance hole location. Additionally, using sturdy tape to block some of the ventilation and drainage holes can keep the house warmer, and adding wood shavings to the bottom of the house improves insulation for cold weather as well.

Roosting Box Placement

Ideally, roosting boxes should be placed in a sheltered area that's protected from prevailing winter winds. Place it in a south-facing location that gets sunlight during the day, particularly in the late afternoon, which will cause the box to retain the heat for a time and be more attractive to birds. The ideal height for a roost box varies for different bird species, but the box should be mounted on a pole or tree trunk between 6 to 15 feet from the ground. If you mount the box on a pole, use baffles to deter predators and keep unwanted wildlife out of the box.

Encouraging Birds to Roost

There are certain things you can do to make your roost box as attractive and safe as possible for the birds.

- ✚ Add a second entrance hole to large roost boxes to help birds exit quickly when they are ready to feed or if they feel threatened.
- ✚ Spread a layer of moss or small wood chips to the bottom of the box for better insulation and to make it more comfortable. This will also make cleaning easier.
- ✚ Paint the box with non-toxic paint in a dark color to help it retain more solar heat. The interior of the box should not be painted.
- ✚ Choose a roost box with an entrance hole appropriately sized for your backyard birds. A hole with a 1 ½ to 2 inch diameter is perfect for most small birds, while larger holes could encourage starlings to roost, forcing smaller birds to go without shelter.
- ✚ Add tape or caulk to the seams of the box to eliminate cracks that will lead to drafts and heat loss. Birds can lower their body temperatures 10 – 15 degrees to conserve energy during winter nights, and even a small draft can become fatal during a cold snap.
- ✚ Clean the roost box periodically, removing any buildup of feces, shed feathers, or other debris. Only clean the box when it is not in use, and be sure it is thoroughly dry and ready for birds to use again at night.



Interesting Facts about September, October and November

By Shash Wighton

www.thefactsite.com

September

- 📖 The Romans often associated different months with different gods. September is associated with Vulcan, the Roman god of fire.
- 📖 September is seen by many to be a very pleasant time of the year.
- 📖 For us in the northern hemisphere, the weather is finally starting to let up. With cooler nights chasing away the heat of the day.
- 📖 September is the time to finish the year's harvest and celebrate its bounty.
- 📖 September's name is really quite inaccurate these days. It was originally the seventh month of the ancient Roman calendar, and as such it was named Septem, which translates into "the seventh month". It wasn't until 451 BC that the months of January and February were added to the calendar, making September the ninth month.
- 📖 September also used to only have 29 days. Thanks to Julius Caesar's reform of the Roman calendar in 46 BC the month now has an additional day!
- 📖 Back in the days of the Anglo-Saxons September used to be called Gerst Monath, which translates into "barley month". It was given this name because it was the time of year that the barley crop was harvested, and it was a special time as they brewed a popular drink out of it.
- 📖 The Anglo-Saxons had another name for September too, which was Haefest Monath. This is a particularly interesting one as this translates into harvest month, and our modern-day usage of the word harvest originates from this name!
- 📖 September heralds the beginning of Fall in the northern hemisphere, with it officially commencing on the September equinox, which is usually between the 21st and 23rd of the month.
- 📖 September begins on the same day of the week of just one other month, December.
- 📖 While it shares the first day, the month does not end on the same day of the week as any other month.
- 📖 September is graced with having two different birth flowers. The two flowers are the vibrant aster and the beautiful yet resilient morning glory. The significance of both flowers is actually very similar, with the aster being said to represent love, while the morning glory represents affection.
- 📖 September only has one birthstone though, but with a stone like this, who needs another? The stone I'm talking about is the majestically vivid sapphire. With its deep blue tones, this precious stone is said to represent the wisdom of the gods, purity and trust. Sapphires were once worn to protect the wearer from both poisoning and other evils.
- 📖 In most countries in the northern hemisphere, September is when students begin a new year at school.



October

- ☛ Sitting square in between September and November, October is the tenth month of the Gregorian calendar.
- ☛ October is seen by many to be a time of real seasonal change, both in the northern and southern hemispheres.
- ☛ For those in the north, autumn is really kicking into gear and the nights are getting cooler.
- ☛ October is also a time to start stocking up on firewood for the long winter season to ensure you're kept warm all the way through until spring.
- ☛ The meaning behind October's name is far from accurate these days. The ancient Roman calendar was based on the lunar cycles, as opposed to our current calendar which is based on the solar cycles. This meant that there were originally 10 months in their calendar, and October was the eighth month. Its name literally translated into "the eighth month" in Latin. In 451 BC the two months of Ianuarius and Februarius were added to the beginning of the calendar, making October the 10th month.
- ☛ There are seven months in the year with 31 days and October is the sixth of them. The amount of days hasn't changed over the ages either, with the ancient Roman calendar also placing 31 days in October.
- ☛ The Anglo-Saxons' name for October was Winterfylleth, with its name containing the words for winter and full moon respectively. It was named this because winter was said to begin from the first full moon of the month.
- ☛ The Saxons had a name for October, too. Theirs was Wyn Monath, which translated into "wine month" because it was the time of the year for making wine.
- ☛ October is a rather beautiful time of year if you live in the northern hemisphere. It's the time of year that the color of leaves begins to change into a magnificent array of hues.
- ☛ The first full moon after the Harvest Moon quite often falls in October and even has its own name. Known as the Hunter's Moon, it's one of the only two full moons (along with the Harvest Moon) that aren't connected to a specific month. Depending on the year the Hunter's Moon either falls in October or November.
- ☛ If you live in the northern hemisphere, you'll be rewarded for keeping your eyes to the skies in October, as the Draconic Meteor Shower can be seen. It contains a single comet that is visible exclusively in the northern hemisphere between October 6th and 10th.
- ☛ An even more impressive meteor shower that is visible in both hemispheres is the Orionid meteor shower, which runs from October 2nd until early November. It is named after Orion as it is usually visible in the same part of the sky as the constellation. At the peak of the meteor shower, as many as 20 meteors are visible every hour.
- ☛ October has just one birthstone, but with this dazzling stone who needs another? October's birthstone is the Opal, which was valued by the Ancient Romans as the most priceless of all. The opal comes in a myriad of striking colors that often seem to swirl together and is a symbol of both faithfulness, purity and hope.
- ☛ It wouldn't be October without Halloween, which is celebrated on October 31st. The celebration's origins go all the way back to the Gaelic people of modern-day England, Scotland, and Ireland, who celebrated the



festival of Samhain. Among other activities, the original celebrants of Samhain would dress in costumes or disguises and go door to door receiving gifts of food, much like how today's children dress up and receive treats!

- ☛ October has two strikingly different birth flowers, the pastel-hued cosmos, and the radiant marigold flowers. The cosmos flower is representative of the joy one finds in peace and love, as well as representing peace. The marigold, otherwise known as the calendula, is said to be a symbol of tranquility, grace, and grief.

November

- ☛ Did you know that the full moon in November is traditionally called the Beaver Moon in the US?
- ☛ Sitting square in between October and December, November is the eleventh month of the Gregorian calendar.
- ☛ Because November weather is starting to get a bit intense, this month is seen as a time to start finalizing any plans or projects that you had for the year.
- ☛ For those of us in the northern hemisphere, fall is coming to an end, the last leaves are falling, and it's getting quite cold out.
- ☛ November's name has remained unchanged since the ancient Roman calendar, which was in use until 45 BC. This first Roman calendar was only made up of ten months, with November being the ninth month. November actually translates rather appropriately into "ninth month" in Latin. When the Julian calendar was adopted in 45 BC two new months were added, which pushed November back to the 9th. Despite its change in position, November was never renamed.
- ☛ November is the last of the four months which have 20 days. The other months are September, April and June.
- ☛ The Anglo-Saxons had quite the fitting name for November. It's usually at this time of the year in the northern hemisphere that cold winds start to chill you to the bone, and as such, they called it "Wind Monath", or wind month.
- ☛ The Anglo-Saxons also called the month of November "Blod Monath", or blood month. It gained this name as it's in November that they would traditionally slaughter cows to provide food for the long winter months.
- ☛ The Full Moon in November is traditionally called the Beaver Moon in the US> The tradition goes back to North America's early colonial years, as it was during this time of the year that hunters would set their beaver traps for the last time before the lakes and water sources they lived in froze over.
- ☛ November has just one birthstone, the radiant topaz. The topaz is symbolic of many things, but most of all it is a symbol of strength and honor. The ancient Greeks also believed that the stone had the ability to turn oneself invisible.
- ☛ November also only has one birth flower, although with a flower like this who needs another?! We're talking about the ever-stylish chrysanthemum, which to the most extent symbolizes cheerfulness. Different colored chrysanthemums have different meanings though – a white flower symbolizes pure love and truth, a red flower says "I love you" like nothing else does, while a yellow flower is a symbol of unrequited love.



Like us on Facebook!

The Marinette County Land Information Department is now on Facebook. This is where you can find out facts about nature, Wisconsin wildlife and birds, the environment, programs we have to offer and other good information. To find our Facebook page – you can go to the Marinette County website

www.marinettecounty.com - go into departments (on the left hand side of the main page). Then click on Land Information. There you will find a Facebook logo that you can click on and it will bring you to our page. The other way you can find us is to log in to Facebook and search for our page. Please type in Marinette County Land & Water Conservation and the page should pop right up. Facebook may have you type in some letter/numbers as a security precaution but believe me it will be worth it. **Oh! Before you leave our page – don't forget to "Like Us"!**



Notes from the Shore is compiled and published by
Marinette County Land & Water Conservation Division.

Any questions, comments, or suggestions should be
directed to Anne Bartels at 715-732-7784 or
abartels@marinettecounty.com.